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Lease Guarantees On-Time School for East Hants

Department of Education and Culture (to July 99)
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The lease for Hants East Elementary -- now signed and public -- guarantees the school will open on time and on budget. This is the first school for which lease details were finalized before construction, consistent with government policy and recommendations from the auditor general.

Education and Culture Minister Robbie Harrison said there is no turning back. "For the students, teachers and community of Lantz, this lease is your guarantee that your school will open its doors by September 1999."

New schools are built on a solid foundation of community support and involvement. "When Hants East Elementary opens its doors, parents, teachers and community members deserve full credit," Mr. Harrison said. "They'll have a school where they'll be happy to send their children, and a school that will be the heart of their community for many years to come."

Through three separate planning teams over several months, teachers and school board members advised on the learning areas and technology needed to offer elementary programs. As well, parents, teachers and community members advised on how to strengthen links between the school, home, community and the new Hants East Middle School.

The new Hants East Elementary will be home to about 450 students from Primary to Grade 5. Within its open welcoming design, the school will have a multimedia library; arts studio, stage and music room; a cafeteria and expanded community gymnasium; and a computer centre and fully networked classrooms. Students will also have a soccer field, basketball court and other recreational areas.

The Municipality of East Hants is investing $800,000 in an expanded gymnasium. A municipal contribution to a school is a traditional practice, where communities request additional facilities. In this case, the larger gym means more opportunities for the school to host community and athletic events, while creating a new community centre in Lantz.

Today also marks a step forward for other communities needing schools. "We're gaining valuable experience as we move forward. We're building what we learn into each agreement," Mr. Harrison said. "We'll continue to do everything in our power to build urgently needed schools for children right across the province."

The school is being paid for through a lease agreement with TR3LC Nova, the private-sector partner. Leases give the province more flexibility and options to meet future school needs. At the end of the 20-year lease, the province can buy the school, renew the lease, or walk away.

The school project is financed as follows: $8.4 million paid by the province through a lease, an $800,000 municipal contribution, and private-sector equity. Monthly lease payments are about $62,000.

Accountants have scrutinized the lease. It passes the mathematical accounting tests as an operating lease, meaning the school is financed without adding to the debt of the province.

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Contact: Donna MacDonald
Education and Culture
902-424-2615
E-mail: macdondc@gov.ns.ca

NOTE TO EDITORS: The lease document is available by contacting Donna MacDonald at the above phone number or e-mail address.

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